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ABSTRACT

Traditional ethics are founded on unquestioned principles that transcend the limitations of a particular person. The result is that behavior is judged on how well people follow rules, not on how well they treat one another. This essay contends that applying this patriarchal approach to teaching situations ignores the needs of students in experiential education programs. A feminist ethic is one based on a caring relationship. The universal concept in an ethic of caring is not a set of absolute moral principles, but one's internal commitment to promote another's well-being by learning about and understanding the other person. Just as a child in a caring relationship is inspired by the acceptance of adults to gain increasingly greater competence, participants in experiential education programs that are in caring relationships with program leaders respond with interest to the challenges offered. Experiential education practitioners can also borrow from the work done by feminist therapists in the area of power. Practitioners need to continually be aware of the power differential between leaders and participants so that it will not be abused, and to find ways that the strong can protect the weak without destroying their sense of dignity in the process. In an ethic of caring, judgment is replaced by acceptance and support. Contains 16 references. (TD)

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The Value of Feminist Ethics in Experiential Education Teaching and Leadership

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In this chapter, I will examine what it means to have an ethic and what might be the meaning and the value of feminist ethics in experiential education teaching and leadership. I'd like professionals in experiential education to consider the value of incorporating feminist ethics into their work or to recognize the feminist ethics they do use and perhaps nurture them more. I want to open the door to discussing feminist ethics in experiential education, and I am not assuming in any way that this chapter will be a final answer.

I advocate that practitioners understand and define their personal ethics. Research in psychotherapy about professional client relationships has shown that moral and ethical issues impact professionals' work with clients (Lerman & Porter, 1990). I believe that moral and ethical issues also impact experiential education practitioners' work with clients. Experiential education practitioners' understanding of the implications of ethical decisions they may make in the field will help ensure that their decision making is in the best interest of their clients. By examining the compatibility of their own personal ethics with the ethical foundation of their employing organization, practitioners can also be more clear and confident about their decision making.

I do not underestimate the risk in examining ethics in experiential education. Jasper Hunt (1990), a prominent ethical theorist of experiential education, understands this risk when he observes that "few topics raise emotional hackles like topics involving ethics" (p. 23). Introducing the topic of feminism or feminist theory to the discussion of ethics is likely to elicit added reactions.

Ethics—What Are They?

Most definitions, including Webster's (1969), state that ethics is the philosophical study of morality. When people talk about their moral values, they are talking about

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their ethics. Noddings (1984) says that to behave ethically is to behave under the guidance of an acceptable and justifiable account of what it means to be moral. Noddings's definition implies an understanding of the question, What does it mean to be moral? Our morals, ethics, and values are typically shaped by our childhood experiences.[1] Noddings (1984) suggests that our ethical responses reflect our memories of both caring and being cared for.

When decisions are based on ethics, morals, or values, they cannot be empirically tested in a scientific manner. For example, the decision to let a youth leave a wilderness course early is an ethical decision. The decision the leader makes may be based on program policy. Program policy comes from the ethical perspective of the people who decided the policy. In this case, it may be policy that all youth complete the course, except in the case of personal health risk. That policy may exist because the organization's staff believes that it is best to finish what one starts, does not want to give refunds, or because the youth would have no other care options.

An example of leaders using their ethics in decision making involves a decision to let the group find a designated camp for the night. Consider a situation where two large men loudly arguing about the route are approached by a much smaller woman, the only one in the group who knows how to use a map and compass, who tries to intervene. The two men then turn their anger toward her, causing her to stop her attempts to help. The leaders can choose to intervene in a variety of ways or to stay out completely. The leaders' actions are guided by their ethics.

There is no way to empirically prove that one course of action is better than another course of action. While we may use empirical data to support our arguments, our responses are based on our ethical beliefs.

The language of ethics is complicated and cumbersome. As in many fields, it is useful to learn and be fluent in this language in order to gain acceptance and credibility. Therefore, I will define some terms that will be useful to this discussion.

- *Summum bonum* is the highest governing value or principle. In ethical decision making using moral reasoning, when deciding an ethical dilemma, one has to be sure to preserve this highest governing value. One example of *summum bonum* is telling the truth at all costs; another example would be saving a life at all costs.
- *Universalizability* is a condition that most ethicists in the dominant culture believe has to be met in order to have an ethic. In the dominant culture, a universalizable ethic means that if under conditions X, you are required to do A, then under conditions similar to X, you and others are also required to do A. In patriarchal ethics, this universality is achieved by having principles. To avoid the problem of humanness, these principles come from without, from a source larger than humans, such as the will of God in the Ten Commandments.
- *Relativism* means that actions may be ethically acceptable in one culture or at one time but not another.

- *Ethical subjectivism* occurs when ethical decisions are based on how a person feels at the moment when they make a decision. Similar circumstances might have different outcomes depending on how the person felt. Ethical subjectivism is avoided by having principles.

Feminist Ethics—What Are They?

A short description of feminist philosophy and its relationship to ethics will lay the groundwork in understanding feminist ethics. A definition of feminism may help set the stage. Lerman and Porter (1990) offer one definition of feminism as "egalitarianism, respect for the individual woman's dignity, and social activism" (p. 5).[2]

Exploration and implementation of feminist ethics has occurred in the field of feminist therapy. Emphasis has been placed on better understanding how the client/therapist relationship can truly benefit the client. Minimizing misuse of power and maintaining the dignity of the individual client is uppermost in feminist therapists' thinking about ethical practice. Feminist therapists believe that "a focus on ethics is a focus on power and how it is used and shared in the process and practices of therapy; it is about the meaning of ethical practice in the relationship of the therapist to her interpersonal world and her intrapsychic reality" (Lerman & Porter, 1990, p. 1). This focus includes recognizing the need for therapists to continually be aware of the power differential between client and therapist so that it will not be abused, and finding ways that the strong can protect the weaker without destroying their sense of dignity in the process.

Other aspects of feminist theory that have been important in shaping feminist ethics for feminist therapists are:

- that women's conflicts, poor self-esteem, and feeling of powerlessness are intimately related to the roles women hold in society
- that self-determination, autonomy, and equal status in society are essential ingredients in promoting women's health
- that the relationship between the therapist and client should promote egalitarianism between the two and foster the client's self-determination and autonomy
- that the feminist therapist be committed to social as well as individual change

(Lerman & Porter, 1990, p. 5)

I will present more information later in this chapter about how relationships are central to feminist ethics. While I do not think that there is one feminist ethic, I will explore the ethic of caring as described by Noddings (1984) as an example of an ethic with feminist considerations.

Ethics in Experiential Education

In his book, *Ethical Issues in Experiential Education*, Jasper Hunt (1990) gives a general perspective on ethical considerations in experiential education. Hunt describes common sources of ethics, using examples of outdoor and wilderness educational situations, to illustrate his points. His discussion of four different approaches to morality helps clarify the kind of thinking that can go into making ethical decisions, and it also introduces a rational ethical methodology. The ethical issues that Hunt raises, still current in experiential education, will come up in the course of most practitioners' work. These include risk-benefit analysis, informed consent, deception, secrecy, captive populations, sexual issues, environmental concerns, individual versus group benefit, students' rights, and paternalism (Hunt, 1990).

Hunt (1990) clearly illustrates that, as practitioners in the field of experiential education,

> We are left with a difficult tension. On the one hand, we must be able to make ethical judgments and on the other hand we are confronted by a subject [ethics] that is elusive by nature. Judgments must be made, yet the criteria and methods by which these judgments are made have never been agreed upon in the history of humankind. (p. 7)

Practitioners of experiential education, often in isolated places, are faced with challenging ethical decisions without having the opportunity to look up the answer in a professional ethics guide or to call another professional to get input and gain perspective.

Hunt (1990) begins his book by saying that "the study of ethics is the study of why one state of affairs is morally better or worse than another state of affairs" (p. 5). The approaches he describes concentrate for the most part on a hierarchical structure of moral reasoning. He focuses on the establishment of principles and that which can be logically derived from them. For ethical guidance, Hunt and many other ethicists in our dominant culture tell people to use principles set forth by Biblical sources, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and John Stuart Mill. According to these ethicists, using principles keeps ethical decision making rational rather than emotional.

As I carefully read Hunt's book, I noticed that, except for Gilligan's statement that women use a different methodology in coming to ethical conclusions, he did not use the work of any women in his book. In fact, the method of moral reasoning that Hunt uses doesn't fit for me or many women (Gilligan, 1982). As I read Hunt's examples and the descriptions of the thought processes he employs, I realize that I tend to ask different questions, or to see the examples he uses from a very different perspective. His arguments follow a line of thought that leaves out a major issue for me, which is understanding the needs of the individual people I teach and guide in specific situations. This is a concern that is addressed from a feminist perspective.

Feminist Ethics in Experiential Education

As I have mentioned, learning some of the language in the ethics field is useful. However, the accepted language in any field can also be a cloak to keep other perspectives quiet. If a different paradigm does not fit within the accepted language, then that paradigm is often dismissed before it is considered. As I discuss feminist ethics in experiential education, I will use some traditional language of ethics as well as language not often used.

Other authors and ethicists offer different perspectives than the hierarchical picture of moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1985; Lerman & Porter, 1990). Although these different perspectives or paradigms are often described in terms of feminine and masculine—women's ways and men's ways—it does not automatically follow that each individual woman uses a feminist ethic or that each individual man uses a patriarchal form of ethics.

Both Gilligan and Noddings argue that women tend to see ethical questions from a different perspective than reliance on principles. Women can certainly arrange principles hierarchically and derive conclusions logically. However, many women will see this process as peripheral or even alien to many problems of moral action. Women can and do give reasons for their acts, but their reasons, as Gilligan (1982) says, often point to feelings, needs, impressions, and a sense of personal ideals rather than to universal principles and their application. As a result of this approach, women have often been judged inferior to men in the moral domain:

> Faced with a hypothetical moral dilemma, women often ask for more information. We want to know more in order to form a picture more nearly resembling real moral situations. Ideally we need to talk to the participants, to see their eyes and facial expressions, to receive what they are feeling. Moral decisions are, after all, made in real situations; they are qualitatively different from the solution of geometry problems. (Noddings, 1990, p. 3)

Noddings (1984) suggests that the emphasis on a hierarchical picture of moral reasoning, such as using *summum bonum*, "gives ethics a contemporary, mathematical appearance, it also moves discussion beyond the sphere of actual human activity and the feeling that pervades such activity." She notes that:

> Careful philosophers recognize the difference between "pure" or logical reason and "practical" or moral reason. However, ethical argumentation has frequently proceeded as if it were governed by the logical necessity of geometry. One might say that ethics has been discussed largely in the language of the father: in principles and propositions, in terms such as justification, fairness and justice. (p. 1)

A major problem of traditional ethics in our dominant culture is their foundation of unquestioned, tacit principles. Using a patriarchal approach, "for an act to be a

good act, it must have been made in accordance with some source of morality that transcends the limitations of a particular person or set of circumstances" (Hunt, 1990, p. 10). This rule often implies that the rules set forth by God in a patriarchal religion must be followed. If cultures use principles, then behavior is judged on the basis of how well people follow the rules, not on how they meet others morally. So, following rules takes on a higher degree of importance than does how people are actually treated. For example, if a rule states that the group members are to establish their own internal social order, and I see a person being harassed by another group member, as an instructor, do I intervene or do I let the group members work with the situation? One might say that I can address the harassment in a debriefing. If I do that, I am still allowing the harassment to take place. From what I know about people, I feel certain that it is not in a person's best interest to experience harassment without intervention, nor is it of value for others to witness harassment, even if it is addressed in a debriefing.

Hunt says that principles are required so that emotions are not used to settle ethical conflicts. However, principles, spoken or unspoken, can serve to separate human beings. Relying on principles for decision making enables people to treat other people differently, and can even lead to use of violence. Using an ethic based on hierarchical principles for moral guidance virtually ensures that groups will argue and fight to prove which principles are the right ones. For example, the Judeo-Christian ethic guides many people and cultures. Among groups that follow the Judeo-Christian ethic, different interpretations exist of what are the true guiding principles. Hence, many people have used ethical principles to justify war and genocide.

> One of the saddest features of the fighting, killing, and vandalism is that these deeds are so often done in the name of principle. When we establish a principle forbidding killing, we also establish principles describing the exceptions to the first principle. Supposing then, that we are moral (we are principled, are we not?), we may tear into others whose beliefs or behaviors differ from ours with the promise of ultimate vindication. This approach through law and principle is not the approach of the mother. It is the approach of the detached one, the father. (Noddings, 1984, p. 2)

Proponents of principles may deny the relativism of moral beliefs, yet principles change as people grow and learn. Professionals in the field of experiential education are inevitably engaged in criticizing and reconstructing our ethical principles in light of new experience. Many professionals in the field of experiential education use some guiding principles that differ from those they used a few years ago. One such shift in position pertains to participants' safety. For example, many practitioners now extend the concept of physical safety to emotional safety.[3] A more dramatic shift in principle took place in a program whose *summum bonum* or highest governing value was a particular educational goal. The change, which consisted of the

establishing of a written policy that fatality on a trip is unacceptable, means that students' survival is now the highest governing principle. Therefore, the goal is to keep students alive, no matter at what cost to the educational goal.

My own career in experiential education began as a counselor at a Girl Scout camp. I realize now that there were feminist components in the organization's ethics and, in retrospect, I appreciate my exposure to them. When I worked for other programs, which were originally developed to teach boys to become better men, I realized that I looked at my practice differently than the male instructors did. I did not understand how they could do some of the things they did and they did not understand my questioning. For example, one program in the early 1970s included a component requiring the students to shoot a tied lamb and then butcher and eat it. I was adamant that the students would have a choice about whether they participated in any part of this activity. Offering a choice was in conflict with the program goal of the students learning experientially about where the meat they ate came from.

This example illustrates another important shift in experiential education thinking, that of "challenge by choice." Today, few organizations include killing mammals in their program and many programs profess a commitment to "challenge by choice." Using the program component of "challenge by choice," accomplishments for people become personal and contextual. This is a shift in thinking that the goal or principle is to "finish" the climb or to "finish" the ropes course in order to be successful. Increasing numbers of women leaders may have helped influence these changes.

The example also illustrates an ethical dilemma of *summum bonum*, or using the highest governing value or principle for a basis of decision making. Is it more important to teach where meat comes from, or to respect a person's choice not to kill animals? These are conflicting highest principles. I, as an instructor, and the program developers had different highest governing values. Or, more accurately, because I had a feminist ethic, I came from a totally different perspective.

Characteristics of a Feminist Ethic of Caring

I believe that a feminist ethic in experiential education would be an ethic based on relationship and that relationship is based on caring. Noddings (1984) calls this an ethic of caring. In an ethic of caring, one responds to another out of love or natural inclination. Ethical caring is more than natural caring, though. One also learns to care as well as learns to be cared for. Therefore, a caring ethic is reflective of one's caring experiences, both natural and learned. However, ethical caring is dependent on, not superior to, natural caring. An ethic built on caring is characteristically and essentially feminine—which is not to say that it cannot be practiced by men. An ethic of caring arises out of women's experience as women, just as a logical approach to ethical problems arises from the traditional masculine experience. This feminine

approach is an alternative approach to matters of morality as prescribed by the traditional logical approach (Noddings, 1984).

In an ethic of caring, one steps into a world of relationship. While this is a feeling mode, it is not necessarily an emotional mode. It is a receptive mode where one is able to receive what-is-there as nearly as possible and without evaluation or assessment. Much of what goes on in a caring relationship is rational and thought out; however, the bottom line is that caring is fundamentally not rational. At the heart of this ethic is the maintenance of the caring relationship.

Describing what caring means in this sense is integral to understanding. Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's, and it is characterized by a move away from self. One makes an internal commitment to promote another's well-being, and does this by learning about and understanding the other person.[4] In an ethic of caring, respect for diversity—including diversity of experiences—is implicit. Intimacy is achieved without annihilating differences. Noddings (1984) also says that since people are so different, there is no simple formula that describes what to teach our children about caring in order to care meaningfully for other people.

Another feminist therapist, Valle Kunnha (1990), affirms the need to understand others as well as to understand oppression, and she asserts that "discussion and development of the philosophy and practice of feminist therapy principles must directly address the concept of an integrated analysis of oppression" (p. 30). She argues that in order to be feminist, an ethic must acknowledge the interface of sexism with other forms of oppression such as age, gender, race, socioeconomic class, and affectional preference, and that the true testimony to ethical beliefs is ethical *action* based on those beliefs.

True caring and understanding of others can add in their personal empowerment. Using a feminist ethic in a therapeutic setting, Smith and Douglas (1990) describe empowerment as the process by which clients are encouraged to make their own decisions, honor their own feelings, and choose their own actions (p. 43). They see empowerment as an ethical imperative. Noddings (1984) agrees, though she makes an important distinction between promoting another's well-being and helping another grow and actualize. She takes issue with Milton Mayeroff's (1971) statement that "to care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help him [sic] grow and actualize himself [sic]" (p. 1). Noddings says Mayeroff's definition misses the caring connection. She believes that making the other person's growth the most significant part of caring turns caring into a form of husbandry, rather than a compassionate act of being with another person. When cared about, people may grow and actualize, if they choose to. If a practitioner's belief is that the participant has to grow and change for the process of experiential education to be successful, then the practitioner has shifted from being present in the moment with the participant to being paternalistic. If practitioners have the participants' growth and

actualization as their goal, then the participant's ability to choose growth and actualization has been undermined.

Practitioners in experiential education often want participants to achieve some level of actualization or to complete challenges. Practitioners interested in an ethic of care will avoid focusing too much on their own agenda for achievement. Doing so could be very uncaring, especially if the agenda is not appropriate for the other person or if the other person is not given the opportunity to find it in her or his own way, on her or his own timing. Being responsible to a participant requires that the person caring, the leader, must monitor her or his own self-interests while operating in the context of the relationship (Peterson, 1992). Professionals, using an ethic of caring, shape what they have to offer to fit the individual participant.

In feminist ethics, one is not guided by a god or principles outside oneself, but instead, by one's internal source of what is known to be true. The uniqueness of human encounters is thus preserved, because decisions are based on the subjective experience of those involved. In an ethic of caring, each person's picture of what it means to be a caring person guides her or his ethical decision making. The decisions people make depend on the nature and strength of their picture of their ideal. How "good" people perceive themselves to be is partly a function of esteem and partly a function of how others respond to and receive them. These others include parents, teachers, outdoor leaders, partners, friends, and the like. For example, if a young child learns that her parents love her unconditionally and have structured behavioral expectations of her, then that child will learn that a caring person loves unconditionally and has certain expectations of others' behaviors. Bronfenbrenner (1978) reports that children engaged in relationships based on an ethic of caring gain competence and flourish. They become able to master situations of greater and greater complexity through their cooperative participation with adults. The acceptance of the adult encourages the child to try. Likewise, in experiential education, it is important that participants are welcome, and that the participants believe they are seen by leaders as contributing people. If participants are in caring relationships with leaders, it follows then that the participants trust the leaders. Due to this trust, participants will often respond with interest to challenges offered by the leaders.

While an ethic of caring does not embody a set of absolute guiding moral principles, there is a universal aspect to the ethic of caring. This universal concept is that the caring attitude—being able to be cared for and being able to care about—is potentially accessible to everyone (Noddings, 1984). The caring attitude remains over time for all humans.[5]

The fundamental universality in the ethic of caring precludes relativism and subjectivism. In an ethic of caring, actions are contextual; however, an ethic constructed on caring is not a form of ethical subjectivism. Caring actions, while predictable in a global sense, will be unpredictable in detail. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1903) describes this as "the sort of behavior that is conditioned not by a host of narrow and rigidly defined principles but by a broad and loosely defined ethic that molds itself

in situations and has a proper regard for human affections, weaknesses, and anxieties" (p. 45).

In an ethic of caring, the emphasis is not on the consequences of our acts, although these are not irrelevant, but rather on the pre-act consciousness of the one responsible. This is where morality is expressed. There are no principles or prescriptions to behavior, yet this ethic is not arbitrary and capricious. This is because actions are guided by the pre-act consciousness of the responsible ones. In experiential education this means that practitioners should strive to be conscious and deliberate about their behavior while remaining in caring relationships with their participants. Therefore, the actions of caring will be varied rather than rule-bound.

Lerman and Porter (1990) maintain the importance of pre-act consciousness and proactive behavior in feminist ethics. They are concerned that traditional ethical codes dating back to Hippocrates do not encourage positive action. They observe that most ethical codes are reactive rather than proactive in that the codes list the lowest common denominator of acceptable behaviors, rather than establish standards that establish and promote ethical behavior that reaches toward the optimum.

The internal guidance that shapes an ethic of caring is similar to what feminist psychologist Jean Shinoda Bolen (in Lee, 1994) describes as women learning to trust what women know and to trust that women know something about themselves. She suggests that living in a patriarchal world has shaped and limited women's perceptions of themselves, their self-esteem, and their actual potential. An essential feature of having access to one's internal guidance is to be able to have the space, freedom, and support to define one's experience and realize that "I am my own best expert."[6] As more women realize that they are their own best experts, the ethic of caring may become more pervasive in the dominant culture, to the point of becoming the norm for how people relate to each other in an ethical way.

Implications for Experiential Education Programming

Development of an ethical framework to use in experiential education programming is an important part of the work of experiential education professionals. Examining ethics helps practitioners become more perceptive and sensitive leaders. It helps practitioners better understand their impact on the people they serve. In fact, practitioners may find that as they examine experiential education under the guidance of an ethic of caring, they will see that the greatest obligation of experiential education educators is to nurture an ethical ideal of caring in students. If practitioners accept this even to a small degree, I then suggest they look at the congruency between the experiential education programming they are using and an ethic of caring. As practitioners look at certain program areas, it may be tempting to say, "Oh, yes, I do that." I am asking them to look deeply, to see if they are operating from their heart in a receptive mode. I am asking practitioners to be able to walk our talk.

Already an ethic of caring has guided some leaders in experiential education as they develop their programming components (Mitten, 1986; Lehmann, 1991; Warren, 1993). I mentioned earlier that one development in experiential education programming has been the concept that participants learn better if, in addition to being physically safe, they also feel emotionally safe. This concept has been extended by some programs to include a framework that helps participants feel spiritually safe as well. For many women's programs, this concept was a cornerstone from their conception. It is the leaders' job in their relationships with participants to create this safety framework.

A leader's ability to develop and maintain ethical caring relationships and to have this as the driving force behind programming is a crucial piece in the success of experiential education experience. Hardin's (1979) ground-breaking research on participants' outcomes on outdoor education courses showed that because participants look to leaders for direction and protection, the impact of the leaders' behavior on participants is powerful. Participants want to be in a caring relationship with the leaders. This is why leaders' goals and assumptions influence the experiences of the course participants so strongly.

While leaders usually cannot choose their participants, leaders can be prepared to meet their participants in a caring relationship. However, if the caring relationship is missing, the one who is supposed to benefit from caretaking may feel like an object. Participants become "cases" instead of people. In our culture, it is likely that most people have at some time experienced being treated like a "case" or object. To be talked at by people for whom we do not exist, to be treated as types instead of individuals, or to have strategies exercised on us, objectifies us (Noddings, 1984).

Practitioners in experiential education can also borrow from the work done by feminist therapists in the area of power. Feminist therapists have gone from thinking that they can erase power differences to acknowledging that they have to deal with them responsibly (Lerman & Porter, 1990). I think the same is true for many experiential education practitioners. It is important to understand that participants are dependent on leaders not only for the social needs of being welcomed and cared for but also for the physical needs of how to tie into a climb or where and how to make camp and food, for example. These needs are often viewed by participants as crucial to their survival. Traditionally, because of the nature of experiential education and the typically informal settings in which experiential educators work, including being outdoors and camping, the power difference between practitioners and participants has sometimes been minimized. Additionally, some of the participants are professionals, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and such, some participants may have a significantly higher income than the experiential educators, and some youth participants may appear bold and worldly, again making it possible for practitioners to overlook the power differences between leaders and participants. However, most participants coming to an experiential education situation will come with increased feelings of insecurity which can accentuate the power difference that already exists

between leaders and participants. In dependent relationships using an ethic of caring, the greater responsibility belongs to the leader. This includes maintaining what Peterson (1992) refers to as a professional boundary. When leaders maintain this professional boundary, participants are better able to attend to their own learning. If the boundary is blurred, participants may become the ones who are caring instead of the ones cared for. A blurred boundary may cause participants to try to do what they believe the leaders want and thus are distracted from their own learning.

The test of the leaders' caring is not wholly in how things turn out; the test lies primarily in how fully, in their actions and decisions, the leaders considered the participants' needs as well as all of the circumstances of the situation, including the leaders' personal beliefs and agendas (Noddings, 1984). The people whom practitioners teach are under their support, not their judgment. In an ethic of caring, judgment is replaced by acceptance and support.

Summary

Somewhere along my career, I realized that the difference between how I used certain components of experiential education and how some others used certain components of experiential education was a fundamental ethical difference. It was not just a difference in principles but a complete paradigm difference. At first, I attempted to understand, explain, and justify these differences I felt and saw; I could not satisfactorily do this. Later I learned to trust my internal knowledge, and for that I am grateful because it is from this place that I have learned more about an ethic of caring. I have decided that human love and caring are enough on which to base an ethic.

Nodding (1984) postulates that ethics in our dominant society are guided by Logos, the masculine spirit, whereas the more natural and perhaps stronger approach would be through Eros, the feminine spirit. I encourage practitioners in experiential education to look closely at this feminine spirit in both research and practice. Practitioners in experiential education care passionately about their participants and work. This commitment to care is the guide to an ethical ideal.

Endnotes

[1] Hunt and Noddings suggest that the terms "ethical" and "moral" can be used interchangeably and I agree with this clarification.

[2] I encourage readers not to misinterpret this statement. By having respect for the individual woman's dignity, it does not mean disrespect or no respect for anyone else's dignity.

[3] Helping participants to feel emotionally as well as physically safe on outdoor trips was a component in many women's programs since the 1970s. A future shift in this component may be to want students to be physically, emotionally, and spiritually safe on programs.

[4] An important component to the ethic of caring is practitioners' caring about themselves. Practitioners must understand what it means to be cared for and must also care for themselves before they can care for others.

[5] This is not to say that different cultures may not have different expressions of caring. These, too, are respected, as are cultures that may not ascribe to an ethic of caring.

[6] Jean Shinoda Bolen is probably most known for her book, *Goddess in Everywoman*, published in 1984. Since then, she has written a sequel equally important for the men's movement, called *God in Every Man*. She has also written *Ring of Power* and *Crossing to Avalon*.

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